

ASPIRA OF AMERICA

REPORT - 1969-70

AHORA SOMOS TODO UNA FAMILIA

November 19, 1970

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FOREWORD

NOW WE ARE ALL ONE FAMILY

Towards the end of the two-week seminar in Puerto Rico this summer, one of the Aspirantes observed that "Now, we are all one family." This single insight sums up the new spirit emerging among Puerto Ricans in New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Juan.

Aspira of America has now completed its first full school year of activities. It began the year with the basic organizational tasks accomplished. Adequate office space, core community leadership and top executive staff had been secured. A national meeting had been held to draw the communities together and to help establish a unified point of view. But, as this report shows, each city had its own unique set of problems and the overall pattern was one of consolidation of each affiliate in its city.

The problems varied widely according to the size of the Puerto Rican population, the attitude of public officials and agencies, the general mood of the city, the quality of initial staff, and the commitment of board members. Efforts to cope with these problems ranged from encouraging board members to broaden their representation to the direct intervention by Aspira of America staff in replacing an executive director who, it developed, was unable to cope with complex staffing difficulties. Whatever the efforts, paramount concern was given to supporting each group's determination to act independently.

Aspira's constructive philosophy, its concept that education and excellence can help achieve community progress, was never in question. Our new board members, executive directors and the staff were constant in their fundamental belief that the Puerto Rican community, through its own programs, could move ahead. And it did.

More and more, public and private agencies are looking to us for leadership. One board member served on the Urban Coalition's Health Task Force. Another was enlisted to serve on the National Committee on Hunger. Staff members, too, are participating at the highest levels of policy and decision-making in education and community development. Appointments have been made to such groups as the White House Conference on Children and Youth, National Reading Council, College Entrance Examination Board and the U.S. Office of Education Talent Search Program.

Thus in 18 months, Aspira of America has been put together. Only six months before that, in May, 1968 Aspira, then but a single-city agency based in New York, called a national conference to focus attention on the fact that the Puerto Rican population had expanded far beyond the metropolitan area. The theme of the 1968 conference was "Del dicho al hecho, hay un gran trecho." From the saying to the doing, there is a great distance. Given the unified determination of our communities, it is clearly a distance which we shall cover.

Gilbert Ortiz, M.D.
Chairman of the Board

Louis Nuñez
President

ASPIRA OF AMERICA

As the national office of the first truly nationwide Puerto Rican organization, Aspira of America has spent this past year as an active participant in the development of the new affiliates, providing aid in fund-raising and public relations, setting up and training board of directors, in staff development and training, in research, and in general troubleshooting.

The end of the year saw all the Aspira affiliates carrying a caseload of 4,909 students, with 2,297 students in 73 clubs. A total of 1,202 Aspirantes were helped to find places in college, most of them with financial support.

With Aspira established in five strategically placed cities, the agency is in a position to offer its services to 80% of the Puerto Ricans.

Staff

Aspira of America is headed by president Louis Nuñez, who for the previous two years had served as Executive Director of Aspira in New York. Working with a director of development and a fiscal officer and using consultants for special purposes, the national office responded to the many and diverse needs of each affiliate. Continuous efforts were made during the year to secure a key person as a program and training director. Although several persons worked in this area for short periods, the national office will still have to find a permanent top-level staff member for this position in the coming year.

Fund-Raising

Aspira of America started the year with a fund raising consultant, but by November determined to develop its own staff-based fund-raising capability. An experienced staff member of

of the agency, Louis Alvarez, former coordinator of training and director of parent programs, was moved into this position in November. In the short time he has been in this job, he has proven to be an effective fund-raiser, capable of developing new sources of support.

Working with Aspira's National Development Committee and the individual Boards of Governors and Boards of Directors, Mr. Alvarez is coordinating efforts to develop financial support in each affiliate city. They have solicited support from the business community in each city as well as from the major foundations.

A total of \$129,374 was raised, from 50 corporations and labor unions, 13 foundations contributed \$113,850 and community support amounted to \$20,000. The Ford Foundation grant still provided base support of \$326,929 for 4 affiliates and the national office.

Lay Leadership

Some of the most concerted efforts of the year have gone into recruiting effective corporate leadership to serve on Aspira's National Development Committee and into recruiting distinguished and widely known Puerto Ricans to serve on the National Board of Directors as well as in helping the affiliates set up their Boards of Governors and Boards of Directors.

Heading the National Development Committee is Teodoro Moscoso, Chairman of the Board of Commonwealth Oil Refining Company, who helped organize "Operation Bootstrap" in Puerto Rico in 1948 and was the first Coordinator of the Alliance for Progress.

Dr. Gilbert Ortiz, former chairman of the Board of Aspira of New York, heads the Board of Aspira of America, the national policy-making arm. The board is composed of at least one representative of each affiliate Board of Directors as well as other Puerto Rican leaders. Although the National Board was originally composed of representatives of Aspira of New York, efforts were made during the year to add distinguished Puerto Ricans from around the country to make a truly national organization.

Staff Development and Training

Meetings at the beginning and the end of the year to train and exchange ideas with all the executive directors of the affiliates, and a two-day seminar in October at the Summit Hotel in New York to train all boards of directors were the highlights of extensive training efforts during the year.

The first annual meeting of the executive directors of Aspira affiliates was held at the Aspira of America offices in New York in June. The meeting reviewed the accomplishments of the first year of operations of Aspira's year-old affiliates, sought solutions to common problems and planned an expanding community advocacy role for Aspira.

The conference for boards of directors in October was attended by 52 persons representing Aspira leadership in five cities. It was the first gathering of all the board members of Aspira and was called to help the new affiliates develop programs and community leadership. Workshops on community support, public relations, fund-raising and committee organizing were held. The conference was an attempt to infuse all with Aspira's philosophy and with a sense of being a national organization.

The national staff provided training consultants for all the affiliates during the year. Staff from each affiliate received additional on-the-job training at the New York affiliate. The national office also served as a staff recruitment resource.

A program guide for training purposes, the first comprehensive attempt to record the Aspira process in a form that everyone can use, was produced and distributed by the national office.

Troubleshooting

One of the most delicate tasks the national staff has had to perform is troubleshooting--heading off or solving problems that threaten to disrupt staffs and boards of directors in various affiliates. Although this task was not foreseen to the extent that it was needed, the national staff has played a useful role as a concerned, but slightly removed, resource--one which has a long range view of Aspira's goals and which does not get involved in local personality conflicts.

An example of this was in Aspira of Puerto Rico where the agency was assisted in resolving a serious organizational problem-- the replacement of its director.

Facilities

In February, Aspira of America moved its staff from the Aspira of New York headquarters to a five room suite of offices at 245 Fifth Avenue in New York City. The suite includes a conference room where board members and staff from Aspira's affiliates may gather for meetings.

Publicity and Community Visibility

Major articles or feature stories have appeared in leading newspapers in every city in which Aspira is operating this year. Television coverage was good, as well. Aspira made the Congressional Record, too, when Rep. Roman Pucinski of Chicago inserted an article that appeared in a Chicago newspaper.

Several articles appeared in the New York Times, including a major feature based on the operation of the new affiliate in Philadelphia.

The New York Daily News published a penetrating series on Puerto Ricans and featured Aspira.

The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, the Newark Evening News, the Newark Star-Ledger, the Chicago Tribune, and the Chicago Sun-Times which ran a three page article in its Sunday magazine, were among the top English-language newspapers in the country in which articles on Aspira appeared.

In the Spanish-language press, both on the mainland and on the island, articles and a number of editorials supporting the agency were published throughout the year. These included a front-page story with photographs of Governor Ferré's visit to New York for the Aspira dinner last September in El Diario-La Prensa.

The agency's access to editors of such influential publications as El Diario-La Prensa in New York, and the San Juan Star and El Mundo in San Juan, the leading Spanish-language newspaper in the Caribbean, continues to be an important tool for amplifying the agency's efforts to secure changes in policies of public agencies and educational systems.

On television, the ABC network station in Chicago produced a 30-minute program on Aspira's work with college students there. A new series on Puerto Rican New Yorkers started in the fall on WPIX-TV and Aspira was one of the first groups presented. TV news coverage of Aspira's press conference announcing a special grant for college retention of \$233,000 from the Carnegie Corporation offered another opportunity to bring the agency to the public's attention.

Among the community agencies giving recognition to Aspira was the Citizens Committee for Children of New York, Inc., which, in its "Report on the New York City High Schools," cited the role played by Aspira clubs in the high schools in giving Puerto Rican students the guidance, sense of identity and importance they need.

Each affiliate also produced its own leaflets and brochures. These were circulated throughout the school system. Patterned after materials used in New York, they stressed the opportunities for students to make contributions to their community by pursuing their education.

In New York, where the Open Admissions policy of the City University meant that more Puerto Rican students than ever would be going to college, Aspira worked with students and developed a three-color poster to be distributed to all high school and guidance counselors, encouraging them to look to Aspira for aid.

Requests to reprint or anthologize Aspira's 1968 report, "The Losers," were also received during the year from a number of publishers and writers.

ASPIRA, INC. OF ILLINOIS

Chicago has a sense of community. People in Chicago believe in Chicago. There is a sense of wanting to do things well. This spirit has been most helpful to Aspira in its first year, especially in fund raising and in gaining acceptance.

Intentions, however, haven't always jibed with reality. Puerto Rican students have not been doing well in Chicago schools. Generally the schools score two years behind the national averages in achievement level and the schools Aspirantes attend lag even further behind. Many Puerto Rican students are as much as four years behind their grade level.

There are 100,000 Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Their average age is 19. Of these, 18,000 are enrolled in public elementary school, but only 4,000 are enrolled in public high school. Many drop out or are "pushed out" as soon as they reach the legal age, often in the transition between junior high and high school. The drop-out rate is about 60%.

Until this year, very few made it to college. This year, 107 Aspirantes from Chicago were admitted to colleges and universities, most with full or partial scholarships. Both additional funds and college places are available, but there were not enough students finishing high school to take advantage of them.

Staff

The professional staff of two club organizers and three educational counselors is led by executive director Mrs. Sylvia Herrera de Fox, a dynamic, socially conscious woman who trained as a lawyer.

Mrs. Fox has been effective in helping Aspira get started, in motivating her staff, and in providing new insights into program possibilities. Although inexperienced in administering an organization such as Aspira, her performance during the year became increasingly effective.

Program

I. Leadership Development

Eleven Aspira clubs with a total membership of 283 Aspirantes-- 75% of them born in Puerto Rico-- were set up in 10 high schools and the Aspira Center.

The emphasis in the clubs has been on helping the students develop an identity as Puerto Ricans and leadership skills, as well as on discussing the effects of discrimination on youth. Techniques used have included group dynamics, lectures and debates. The students were assisted in every way possible to assume control of the clubs' program planning and implementation.

A nine-week leadership institute, entitled "Project Think", began the last week of June. One hundred club members participated in the institute. Almost \$40,000, primarily for student stipends for the course, was secured from the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Of this amount, \$8,690 was used for additional staff. The Central YMCA College agreed to grant 12 college credit hours to the high school students participating in the institute, which was taught by college level faculty.

Plans were completed to set up the Aspira Clubs Federation structure by the end of the summer.

Acting in her role of advocate, Mrs. Fox successfully championed the cause of 20 students from Chicago who were attending the University of Puerto Rico and were in danger of having to drop out because their monthly stipend from the University was going to be cut from \$100 to \$50 a month.

Mrs. Fox visited Puerto Rico and through the good offices of Manuel Casiano, a National Board Member and chief Commonwealth representative in the States, met with the President of the University, the Dean of Students and the Secretary of Education, and succeeded in resolving the matter. The cuts were restored and the students were allowed to remain.

II. Educational Counseling

The Chicago staff conducted 1,260 individual counseling sessions, 97 group sessions and 11 workshops during the program year. Over 500 individual discussions between staff and parents of students were also held.

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Twenty college students who were enrolled in two-year college programs and found it impossible to either move into good career entry jobs because of inadequacy of their studies, or didn't know how to move on to a four-year college, were given special counseling to assist them. Fourteen were placed in upper division colleges.

III. Community Involvement

The staff promoted and developed a special program leading to the B.A. in Bilingual Education in collaboration with the School of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus.

The course is funded under the Education Professions Development Act. Aspira recruited the 14 participating juniors, the program director and the curriculum director. The students will spend one-third of their time student teaching at bilingual centers, and they will devote 24 credit hours to a specially designed curriculum which is shaped to meet the needs of Puerto Rican student teachers and their students.

Mrs. Fox has also been consulting with the staff of Governor's State College, an upper division college which is now being organized, to ensure that programs will be developed to meet the needs of Puerto Ricans, Mexican American and other Spanish-speaking youths graduating from junior colleges in the Chicago area.

IV. Looking Ahead

Although in one year, Aspira quadrupled the number of Puerto Ricans in Chicago who are attending college, the number still adds up to less than five percent of the Puerto Rican college age population, compared to the national average 45%. Drop-out and achievement rates still compare unfavorably even with the admittedly poor progress of the black population in Chicago.

Staff and Board came to the conclusion at the annual meeting that if Aspira is concerned with education as a means for developing the capacity for dealing with life's problems, for effective citizenship, and for earning a living, then efforts must go further than attempting to increase the numbers attending school and the length of their stay there.

Aspira's role as an advocate of the student's right to an education must be more systematic than objecting to an injustice at an individual school. Efforts must be made to overcome existing Civil Service obstacles to appointment of a significant number of Puerto Rican teachers and principals or to ensure that some of the more effective bilingual programs are delegated to community-based non-profit groups. New efforts in these directions will obviously require additional funding.

After a full year of implementing the Aspira program in Chicago, the staff has concluded that the program should be modified and expanded. Some of their reasons include:

It costs \$50 to keep a school building open after school hours, thus making it difficult for after-school meetings to take place.

Carfare on public transportation is 45 cents each way. It is 55 cents when a transfer is required.

The school guidance counselors were always present at meetings between Aspira staff and students in the schools, obstructing the development of rapport and confidentiality between the Aspira worker and the students.

In response to these and other factors, the staff has considered several alternatives for reorganizing the delivery of services. Among these are:

Paying bus fare to the Aspira Center for Aspirantes who can't afford it.

Organizing area clubs to generate a feeling of a mass movement among Puerto Rican students and as a way of dealing with differing needs, motivations and skill levels. The efforts at organizing and maintaining Aspira clubs at the individual schools would continue.

All the area clubs would use the facilities of the central Aspira office and would also be serviced through an Aspira mobile staff office.

The staff also sees the need for organizing a variety of special programs into a neighborhood pre-college school which would work in concert with the regular school system, providing remedial work and tutoring, and which would also provide college accredited courses and activities to high school students.

Lay Leadership

The Board of Directors is composed of distinguished Chicago Puerto Ricans, including the chairman Sebastián Rivera, an established attorney and community leader. An elder statesman in the community, he initially resisted expanding the Board beyond seven members, most of whom he had known before. Because the Board was so small, it was not able to function as effectively as necessary.

As Mr. Rivera saw that the agency had become viable, as his own contact with the community were broadened, and as new leaders emerged on the Board who viewed the Board as a vehicle for leadership development, Mr. Rivera acceded to efforts to expand.

There are now eleven members, and the director and staff have good support from the Board, particularly from Mrs. María Cerda, who is vice chairman (program) and also a member of the Chicago Board of Education. Recently the president of the Aspira Clubs Federation joined the Board as its first student member. Towards the end of the year, the Board, with a good deal of leadership and participation exercised by new members, began to work more smoothly together and with the staff.

Fund-Raising

Fund-raising from private sources has shown significant progress in Chicago. Almost \$30,000 was raised from local corporations and foundation sources, and indications are that this amount can be greatly increased in the coming year. It appears that Chicago may be the first affiliate outside of New York, which will be able to sustain itself with local support.

Senator Charles Percy's interest in Aspira helped it to reach out to such figures as Donald Graham, Chairman of the Board of Continental Illinois Bank, the largest bank in Chicago, as well as Patrick Crowley, a prominent attorney, and philanthropist Clement Stone.

Mr. Graham hosted a highly successful luncheon for Aspira at which Senator Percy spoke, and which was attended by 55 top corporate leaders. The luncheon enabled the staff and board to successfully launch the corporate solicitation effort.

ASPIRA, INC. OF NEW JERSEY

Newark, New Jersey, has become a national symbol of urban decay and despair. The Puerto Rican leadership there, however, is a militant one, determined that something must be done to help its children. Educational statistics about Puerto Ricans in the city show how much help is needed. Out of 7,810 Puerto Rican students in the public school system last year, only 96 survived to the 12th grade.

For the Puerto Rican student in Newark, the probability of dropping out before graduating from high school is 85%. In the past, less than five percent of these fortunate few have gone on to higher education. In the nearby suburb of Upper Montclair, 80 percent of the high school graduates go on to higher education. In the entire state of New Jersey, there are less than 150 Puerto Rican college students, some of whom are out-of-state residents.

This past year, Aspira assumed a leading role as the only private Puerto Rican educational agency in the state of New Jersey, focusing this year on Newark, where 20% of the 45,000 New Jersey Puerto Rican students live.

Newark is one of the five cities in the tri-county area of Essex, Hudson and Passaic, which have a combined Puerto Rican population of close to 150,000. About one-third of the Puerto Rican population lives in Newark.

Staff

The professional staff of three educational counselors and one community organizer has been lead by the youthful but skillful executive director, John Rosario. An excellent administrator, he has become knowledgeable about implementing the Aspira program. However, Aspira of New Jersey has experienced serious difficulty in finding staff. Very few Puerto Ricans in Newark are adequately trained or have any relevant experience, and it is difficult to find candidates from New York or other areas who are willing to work in Newark. An intensive recruiting campaign will have to be carried out if Aspira's plans for expansion into other communities are to be successful.

At the end of the year, Amilcar Velez, a former Aspirante who holds a masters degree from the Columbia School of Social Work, was hired as assistant director. Mr. Velez is bright, able, and committed to the Aspira philosophy and the Puerto Rican community.

Program

1. Leadership Development

Eight Aspira clubs were set up in seven high schools and the Aspira Center to serve a total of 217 club members. An experimental club was organized in a junior high school. The Students' ages range from 15 to 21, and the grades range from ninth to 12th.

The ages are significant for a variety of reasons. A high number of those in junior high school are over 17 years old, when most non-Puerto Rican students are already in high school. This transition point is found to be a dangerous one for Puerto Rican students. Older than many of their classmates, they simply drop out.

The largest number of students in the senior high school group are 19 to 21 years old. This factor creates a number of identity and adjustment problems for the Puerto Rican senior who is competing with students two and three years his junior. Some others in the older group being served are high school graduates, out of school for a couple of years, who have decided to try to go to college and have turned to Aspira for help.

The Newark Board of Education, perhaps because at this point it is willing, even eager, to accept all the help it can get, has been extremely cooperative. It allowed Aspira clubs to be organized in the schools, and urged the individual principals to work with the agency. The board very quickly compiled a list of all Puerto Rican in the high schools and junior high schools and sent the list to Aspira. In other cities, these two steps have taken Aspira months to negotiate.

II. Educational Counseling

The staff has provided, 1,600 individual and 31 small group counseling sessions to 323 students 210 of them in high school. More than half are U.S.-born Puerto Ricans.

The staff has made extensive use of the educational workshop method which serves as a reinforcement to the group sessions.

College placement efforts resulted in 56 Aspirantes being admitted to a wide variety of colleges.

The agency's commitment to involve parents in the education of their children is revealed by a total of 218 personal contacts with parents, and plans for an extended parent-student program.

III. Looking Ahead

The staff has submitted two proposals to the Model Cities Program--in Hoboken for \$30,000 and in Paterson for \$100,000--for funding new Aspira programs in those cities, as well as a proposal for a Parent-Student Guidance Program to the Board of Education of Newark. It was recently learned that they will receive \$22,000 from Hoboken to begin the program. The only new federal money which Aspira can expect to tap is in the Model Cities programs in individual communities.

The Puerto Rican community in New Jersey has been described as the "fastest growing minority group" in the state. This is particularly true in Hoboken where it is estimated that there are over 22,500 people of Puerto Rican descent. This figure is over 50% of the total population, perhaps the first city in America where this is the case. Statistics show that they are the youngest, poorest and least educated of any group in the city.

Neither the schools nor other programs designed to reach and serve students seem to be reaching the Puerto Rican students in Hoboken. Consequently the number of Puerto Rican youngsters graduating from high school there has not increased in proportion to the increase in Puerto Rican community.

In the small cities of under 100,000, Aspira has observed that local governments in such communities as Paterson, Hoboken, Passaic, and Jersey City seem to be completely unable to cope with the problems arising out of the enormous increase of the Puerto Rican population in their community. We feel that Aspira can serve as a consultant in the whole field of education in all of the cities where Puerto Ricans make up at least 20% of the population.

Lay Leadership

Hilda Hidalgo, chairman of the Board of Directors, brought Aspira wide contacts in educational and social work circles. A social worker, associate professor at Rutgers, and former associate director of a major child care agency in the city, Miss Hidalgo is an activist, involved in a wide variety of causes.

Others members of the board are equally distinguished, including Pablo Rivera, vice chairman (program), community leader for many years, Maria Blake, on the staff of Rutgers University, and Gloria del Toro, former director of the local Puerto Rican Anti-Poverty program.

The relationship between the Director and the Board Chairman has been excellent. They respect each other and complement each other functionally and politically. During the crucial formative period of the agency, Mr. Rosario concentrated primarily on handling the internal operations of the agency while Mrs. Hidalgo carried a heavy portion of the agency's community relations work.

Fund-Raising

Fund-raising has been difficult in Newark despite a distinguished Board of Governors which includes Fairleigh S. Dickinson, Jr., president of Becton, Dickinson & Co.; Richard Scudder, publisher of the Newark Evening News; and Alan Lowenstein, corporate attorney; Millicent Fenwick, Assemblyman; and Malcom Talbott, vice president of Rutgers, in charge of the Newark branches.

There is a lack of community morale, and corporate leadership is very negative towards prospect for the future. Leaders in the community are so involved with black problems, they have not thought through the problems of the Puerto Ricans.

There have been some changes, however, and \$19,000 has been raised. The Prudential Life Insurance Company, one of the largest corporations in Newark, gave Aspira a grant of \$2,000 for its first year of operation and has increased that grant to \$2,500 for its second year.

An organizing luncheon in late May, at which corporate leaders were asked to buy tables and reserve two seats for Aspirantes who were going on to college, was held. About 200 leaders in education, banking and industry attended.

The presentation, which included talks by the chairman of the Board and the executive director, as well as the introduction of the Board of Governors, helped focus new attention on the agency. Two members of the Board of Governors--Assemblywoman Millicent Fenwick and Malcolm Talbott--were cited for their work on behalf of Aspira and the Puerto Rican community.

Facilities

The Aspira center is presently located in the main downtown business district of the city at some distance from the Puerto Rican community. Its location, however, has contributed to its image as a professional agency. The agency is currently weighing these two factors before deciding on a permanent location.

ASPIRA, INC. OF PENNSYLVANIA

On the surface, Philadelphia's problems seem not to be as severe as other cities. But for the Puerto Rican youngster in school, there are as many problems to deal with as in more troubled communities.

There are about 50,000 Puerto Ricans living in Philadelphia. This past year there were 7,989 Spanish-speaking students in the public schools--1,547 of them in junior high and 903 in high school. About 70% of the Puerto Rican children drop out of Philadelphia public schools before they finish high school. In the past, less than three percent of those graduating have gone on to post-secondary education. Most of the students drop out before reaching the tenth grade, and most of those who do reach it are channeled into vocational programs.

Staff

The executive director of Aspira of Pennsylvania is Ralph Villafañe, who comes to the agency with excellent credentials. He attended Temple University, the University of Puerto Rico, served in the Air Force, and was a senior counselor for the Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia.

His commitment to the program and its goals molded his staff into an effective organization. The professional staff this year was composed of a community organizer (a former Peace Corps worker who was recommended by Aspira of New York), a community organizer aide and two educational counselors. As has been the case in Newark, there is difficulty in recruiting staff and during the summer several staff members resigned for much better paying positions.

Program

I. Leadership Development

Eight Aspira clubs were started this year in seven Philadelphia high schools and the Aspira center to serve 302 members. Of these,

there were almost twice as many youngsters born in Puerto Rico as in the United States. Freshmen, sophomores and juniors, as well as high school seniors, took part in the program.

In addition to the Aspira core leadership program, the agency co-sponsored an unusual three-day leadership development conference with Haverford College which involved 70 club officers and delegates, 15 community experts and 15 trainers. The conference was designed to teach club officers organizational and leadership skills so that their clubs could better handle the problems that their members face.

The problems discussed included such topics as: How can the Aspira Clubs portray a Puerto Rican identity; Is being a Puerto Rican more than just speaking Spanish; Conflicting values between North American and Puerto Rican cultures; employment; housing; health; discrimination; legal difficulties; How the Puerto Rican student can relate to the older generation; and Difficulties encountered in schools that are an impetus to leave school.

The "T" group method, including role playing, problem solving and feedback, was used to train the Aspirantes. The conference was preceded by a three-day training session a week earlier to train the trainers, who included Aspira counselors as well as Haverford students, in the effective use of this method.

One of the clearest examples of the agency in an advocacy role was its attempt to place students at LaSalle College in Philadelphia.

It came to the staff's attention that LaSalle College, which was running an excellent "Open Door" program, especially for disadvantaged students of minority groups, never had, in its three years of operation, a Puerto Rican in its program. The summer program prepared students for entry into the college in the fall.

Though the summer 1970 roster was complete by June, the Aspira staff persuaded the coordinator of the program to take in four Aspirantes. After two weeks in the program, the Aspirantes were

told they would have to leave because they had not gone through the usual screening process and because their reading test results were not high enough.

The executive director, the chairman of the Board of Directors (an alumnus of the college) and the staff brought a great deal of pressure to bear on the college through discussions, letters, community support, and press releases. They also secured funds from the Model Cities College Placement Division to support the students if they were accepted at LaSalle for the fall, eliminating that as an objection, and finally got the college to agree to allow the students to stay.

The result was that although one of the students dropped out for personal reasons, three others, with tutoring, completed the course and entered LaSalle in the fall where they are doing good work.

The LaSalle administration agreed, furthermore, to work with the Aspira staff on the possibility of securing additional Puerto Rican students for the coming year.

II. Educational Counseling

The agency, which carried a caseload of 266 students, had eight group counseling and workshop sessions, and involved 100 parents in the program. There was some difficulty in getting the workshops into operation and the staff found that individual counseling for the 266 students in the program was more productive for this initial period.

The agency established liaison with over 50 colleges and universities. Of the 58 high school seniors involved in the program, 55 were placed in college with 16 receiving financial assistance.

The staff developed proposals for a Parent-Student Guidance program, which they submitted to the Model Cities Program, and a Talent Search program. They also attempted, although without success, to acquire funds from the bilingual program operated by the Board of Education.

The agency had had some difficulty in being accepted as an accredited educational agency and in breaking through the system. Although the staff won an agreement from the Central Board of Education to allow organizing in the schools, each individual school presented its own problems.

III. Looking Ahead

Plans were made, as the year ended, to organize the Aspira Clubs Federation, and to select two students for the Pennsylvania Board of Directors.

The agency expects to move ahead in its role as advocate. It sees as priorities changing the image of the agency in the schools, insuring that local school administrators and counselors allow Aspira's staff to see the students' records, and increasing the overall accountability of the school to the Puerto Rican parents. As part of this effort, the executive director expects to increase the involvement of the Board of Directors and the parents.

IV. Lay Leadership

In contrast to the aggressiveness of the Aspira Board in Newark, the Pennsylvania Board of Directors is quieter and slightly more conservative. It is made up of small businessmen who were born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Philadelphia. This creates a more cohesive, folksy atmosphere about the Board, which provides certain strengths, but makes for some problems in dealing with the established community organizations and the educational system.

Domingo Martínez, the chairman of the Board, the owner of a travel agency and community leader, is perhaps the most successful in bridging this gap.

V. Fund-Raising

There has been difficulty in finding corporate leadership to head the Board of Governors in Philadelphia. As a result, most of the agency's efforts have been in securing financial help from foundations.

The first significant grant received was from the Samuel S. Fels Foundation for \$5,000. Seven local foundations were approached in the Philadelphia area, of which one, the Otto Haas Foundation, made a grant of \$15,000 in July 1970.

Successful fund-raising in Philadelphia must lie in the identification of major corporate leadership.

Facilities

This is the only one of the new affiliates which owns its own building. The agency acquired a four-story, 25 foot wide brownstone-type building on an avenue in the central area, in the Puerto Rican community for a down-payment about equal to what they would have paid in rent during the year. The building was purchased for approximately \$15,000 with a down payment of \$6,000.

All of the members of the Board of Directors worked on refurbishing the building, including the chairman, a former electrician, who did the wiring. Freshly painted and spacious, it provides a pleasant setting for the agency's activities, and an image of permanency for Aspira in Philadelphia.

ASPIRA, INC. OF PUERTO RICO

Aspira of Puerto Rico operates in the one place Puerto Ricans are not in the minority, and yet its target population is the same--poor, undereducated Puerto Ricans. In Puerto Rico this becomes a class problem, dealing with the very poor, and developing economic leadership among the lowest economic class.

The tremendous progress in Puerto Rico, which has resulted in the development of the island from a rural to a technological society, has largely bypassed 30 to 40% of the population. Youth from this class are for the most part apathetic. The Aspira program creates a ferment of hope and desire for constructive change in them.

However, when it so clearly becomes a class problem, both to participants and observers, certain suspicions and difficulties are bound to arise from those for whom the status quo is a very comfortable way of life, especially in as politically volatile a place as Puerto Rico is these days.

Aspira of Puerto Rico has had more than its share of such difficulties and misunderstandings in its first year of operation. Nonetheless, by the end of the year it had a working program, an outstanding Board of Directors and Board of Governors.

Adding to its difficulties was the fact that this was the only new affiliate which did not have six months preparation time. Instead it attempted to offer services from the outset. Staff turnovers, false political accusations, and the lack of working telephone service for three months were among the stumbling blocks that were overcome.

Staff

The executive director, Hilda Maldonado, a former member of the Board of Directors, was appointed to her job in May. The previous executive director, a former director of probation services in the Justice Department of the Commonwealth, had difficulty in establishing good working relations with both his staff and the Board of Directors, and resigned at the end of February. Irene Gneini, supervisor of group counseling, served as acting director until Mrs. Maldonado was appointed.

Mrs. Maldonado, a trained social worker, with over 10 years of experience, enjoys the full confidence of the Board of Directors. All of the professional staff, which includes three community organizers and four educational counselors, are college graduates and some hold graduate degrees. Young, aggressive, socially conscious, and dedicated to Aspira's goals, the present staff presented a challenge to a director who could channel those energies constructively.

Recruiting staff is easier in Puerto Rico than elsewhere because Aspira's salary scale in Puerto Rico compares favorably with all professional employment on the island.

Program

I. Leadership Development

By the end of the first program year, 335 students had become members of Aspira clubs in 12 San Juan neighborhoods. The clubs met in churches, community centers, housing projects and private clubs as well as in a few schools.

An Aspira Clubs Federation was formally organized in March, and three student delegates to the Aspira Board of Directors were chosen.

In addition to the core leadership program, Aspirantes have participated in a leadership seminar, a cultural educational camp, conferences on the prevention of drug addiction and venereal diseases, trips to Catholic University, the college of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts, and the University of Puerto Rico, and a two-day camp conference organized by the Aspira Federation delegates.

One of the groups the agency was anxious to reach were the school drop-outs, notably hard to reach in any city. By February, less than 10% of all club members were drop-outs and often they would join a club and leave after a while. By May, however, more of these ex-students were joining and seeking help with their education. Alert to this shift, the staff has been formulating plans to increase and motivate this hard-to-reach group. One possibility is to select club members who are good in inter-personal relationships and to train them to be "fishermen," to go out to their communities and recruit drop-outs for their clubs through a planned method.

II. Educational Counseling

In San Juan, a city of 800,000 motivation for higher education is widespread. New enterprises requiring advanced education and training continue to expand. But poor youngsters confront many obstacles to post-secondary education. Among certain poverty-impacted schools, less than five percent are admitted to college, and the number admitted since 1967 has actually declined. There are few facilities for vocational education and there is no route which allows capable students to progress from vocational schooling to higher education.

The agency has put a strong emphasis on tutoring to help poor students meet the rigid standards for acceptance at the University of Puerto Rico, the only tuition-free college on the island. Most high school students who can afford it in Puerto Rico receive tutoring and counseling to prepare for rigorous entrance examinations. The agency is determined that the very poor, whose schools are usually the weakest in the teaching of English, at least get the same help.

The focus of the Aspira program in Puerto Rico cannot be the same as in the States. Although Puerto Rico as a society sends approximately one-third of its high school graduates to college, the bottom one-third is effectively shut off from all opportunities for higher education. A major focus of the Aspira program is to provide much more extensive tutoring to this group.

Plans were underway in June to set up tutoring programs using college students from the University of Puerto Rico's School of Social Work as tutors in English, Spanish and math, as well as on test-taking for the College Boards Exams.

The federally-funded Aspira Scholarship and Loan Center has been attempting to help students caught between the free but over-crowded University of Puerto Rico and the private colleges which have room but not enough scholarships. Aspira placed 50 students in colleges on the island.

Aspira is the first private agency to work closely with the total public educational system on the island. Although mutual trust and confidence must still be built, some educators are joining in the efforts to cut down on high school drop-outs and to increase the numbers of those qualifying for post-secondary education.

All 355 Aspirantes took part in the educational counseling program which included workshops, trips preparation for college admission, and nine career conferences on the fields of engineering, architecture, accounting, management, finance, medicine, pre-medicine, land surveying, and audio-visual techniques.

The Parents Association is small, but active, meeting twice a month. In addition to receiving counseling on how best to help their children's education, the parents have participated in, and helped prepare for, several agency activities. Working with the parents' counselor, the group has prepared a dynamic work plan for 1970-71.

III. Looking Ahead

Aspira of Puerto Rico will expand its work in recruiting, counseling and tutoring, and will give a good deal of attention to improving its relations with school administrations and community groups. It will make a special effort to create new opportunities for post-secondary education on the island for students from very poor families, particularly in the technological field.

Lay Leadership

Although there has been some turnover in the Board of Directors, the final roster at the end of the year was composed mainly of professional and business leaders on the island. It includes the head of the Cooperative Association of Puerto Rico, businessmen, social workers, labor leaders, the clergy, agency heads and three students leaders.

The chairman of the Board, Juan Torruella, a young, dynamic, graduate of the University of Notre Dame, is vice president of Barros & Carrión Insurance Co., Inc., the largest insurance brokers on the island. He is committed to Aspira's approach for constructive change. Mr. Torruella is the third chairman of the board this year. The first chairman, Mrs. Masso, resigned, and the second, Jose Moscoso, died. Although there is much potential on the Board, with so much change during the year, the Board has not had an opportunity to stabilize. It is expected that the Board will be a positive and effective force in the coming year.

Fund-Raising

The newly formed Board of Governors is representative of the top corporate, media, and educational leadership on the island. It is headed by Edward T. Krieger, president of the International General Electric of Puerto Rico. The vice chairmen are Frank Ballester, president of Ballester Hermanos, Inc., and Richard A. Lee, president of Albert E. Lee & Son, Inc.

The Board was formed over an extended period. All are aware of the crucial need for private support, and by June were laying the groundwork for a fund-raising campaign to raise \$30,000 by December. It must be added that due to the many changes in staff and Board, no effective fund-raising was done in Puerto Rico last year. The Board is well aware of this problem, and it is expected that the situation will change during the coming year.

ASPIRA, INC. (NEW YORK AFFILIATE)

Aspira of New York, now in its ninth year, went through a significant restructuring during the past year. It reorganized its clubs, its personnel and its program methods.

Staff

Louis Nieves, who joined Aspira of New York in 1968 as program director, bringing with him experience which included serving as a Job Corps Counselor and as a supervisor of research programs in delinquency, was named assistant executive director in June, 1969. Last fall, with the formation of Aspira of America, he took on the role of executive director of Aspira of New York. Mr. Nieves, who grew up in the poorest "barrios" of both San Juan and New York, holds a masters degree from the Baruch School of City University in industrial psychology, and has done advanced studies in mental health towards a doctoral degree.

He heads a staff of 70, including over 40 full-time professionals in education and leadership development work. Several significant steps were taken this year to ensure that this staff was able to deliver the program in the greatest depth to the greatest number of students, and to create an expertise in each division of the agency to allow for depth-programming.

The agency as a whole was divided into various divisions, each having specific responsibility in one area, which then would be meshed with each of the other divisions.

Of greatest note in the reorganization was the decision to reduce the number of clubs to relate more realistically to the personnel resources available to service those clubs. Special care was taken not to reduce the number of students serviced in these clubs, but rather the number of units in which they would be serviced, so that no community organizer would be responsible for more than six clubs.

One of the most pressing staff problems continues to be the recruitment of qualified supervisory personnel, since the effectiveness of first-line personnel seems to be in direct relationship to the excellence of the division director.

Although the salary offered middle level staff has been increased, the candidates do not seem to be significantly different in experience, qualifications, or expertise than those recruited at the lower figure.

The problem may be a function of the scarcity of Puerto Rican middle level professionals in the community, which makes Aspira, in effect, a training ground for many young professionals, who, once they developed management skills, find that their services are at a premium, and leave for much higher-paying positions.

Program

I. Leadership Development

There were 1,140 members in 34 Aspira clubs in New York this year. The year started with 53 clubs, and though an additional community organizer was assigned to each center, making a total of six, it became evident that the staff was seriously overextended.

The realignment of the clubs was difficult and generated some conflict. For some students it was difficult to accept the fact that their particular club had been merged with another. The rationale for the realignment was eventually accepted, and elections for new club officers were held on schedule.

A greater percentage of Aspirantes participated both in the club and the Aspira Clubs Federation elections than in previous elections. The reduction in number of clubs, which resulted in a reduction in the delegate body of the A.C.F. from over 100 to 72, made for a less unwieldy group.

A major accomplishment for the A.C.F. was the adoption of a new constitution, the first in nine years. After carefully evaluating the Federation's changing needs and after considerable debate, the A.C.F. board proposed the new constitution, which the delegates accepted.

In response to considerable agitation for more autonomy on a borough level, the new constitution creates borough councils responsible for developing borough-wide programs. The present

A.C.F. board of directors is the highest representative body of an essentially decentralized organization. The change provides for the development of additional leadership level positions. The constitution still retains strong powers for the board so that it can continue to act as an integrated city-wide organization.

The development of a more mature partnership between the A.C.F. and the staff of the agency was a major achievement during the year. As a response to demands for more student participation in determining the destiny of the agency, the student membership in the agency's Board of Directors was increased from three to five, bringing it to more than 25% of the entire membership. One of the five is a college student, which gives formal recognition to the college students with whom the agency has begun to work in a major program, the Aspira College Retention Program.

The importance of this student representation on the highest policy-making body of the agency is obviously great. Student representatives of the A.C.F. participated in all important staff committees of the agency. This included the executive staff committee, made up of the executive director, deputy director, borough center directors and coordinators. Aspirantes also participated in the borough center unit meetings where the center director and his staff reviewed and coordinated all center activities.

Aspirantes were invited to participate in other activities, including formal community relations programs where students often explained and interpreted the work of the agency.

Meaningful student participation brought mutual respect and a sense that all concerned had participated in the major decisions affecting the Aspirantes and the agency.

The A.C.F. presented a Puerto Rican Culture program for the community in East Harlem on Puerto Rico Discovery Day. The Areyto, the initiation ceremony for club members, this year was the largest ever held. It was combined with the annual formal dance which drew a large attendance. In late June, the A.C.F. annual convention was held during a three-day weekend on the campus of Wagner College.

Planned and executed by the A.C.F. Board, the convention was held to train all newly elected A.C.F. and club leaders. The convention was preceded by a three-day planning session on the campus of Farmingdale College of the State University of New York. The training included a study of the new constitution, as well as the role of the leader, and the dynamics of group behavior.

Plans were complete, as the year ended, for the annual 15-day Leadership Seminar in Puerto Rico for 48 Aspirantes, including three each from Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and Puerto Rico, with the New York contingent. This activity provides Aspirantes with a first-hand knowledge of Puerto Rican life on the island. For most, particularly those born outside of Puerto Rico, this is an emotional as well as an educational experience. This was the first time that Aspirantes from outside of New York participated in this seminar.

It is anticipated that in the future this activity will be coordinated by the national staff, rather than by one of the affiliates.

A variety of community-oriented activities were sponsored by the clubs. These included involvement in education issues such as the community school board elections and the open admissions policy of the city university.

II. Educational Counseling

The educational program led by center counselors and the Scholarship and Loan Center added a total of 1,548 new students this year. Of the students serviced, 75% were between 16 and 21 years old, more than half were girls, and two-thirds were born in the United States. Two thirds are students in academic programs, and the agency has determined to make a greater effort to reach the vocational and commercial program students next year.

Of the new intakes, 36% were seniors, 26% juniors, 20% sophomores and 18% freshman. In previous years, the percentage of senior intakes had been higher. This new pattern may guarantee that a larger number of Aspirantes will be in the program for a longer time to receive the maximum amount of services.

The counseling program began the year with a large caseload of high school seniors. By the end of December, over a third of these students had applied to at least one post-secondary institution. The counselors at the borough centers provided the initial orientation and assistance with applications to over 1,100 seniors.

A total of 3,405 students were serviced in the counseling program. Of these, 70% came from families whose earnings are below \$6,000. Only 13% have an income over \$6,000. Another 17% are receiving public assistance, pension or unemployment benefits. For many families, sending a working-age child to college was a financial sacrifice, even on a full scholarship.

The educational workshops emphasized the necessity for formal education and the opportunities available to our students. In order to streamline the content and format of the workshops, a manual was revised to better reflect the needs of the counselors and students.

An increasing number of workshop sessions were given on Saturdays because of the number of Aspirantes who work after school. The workshop was the most important counseling medium for groups of students.

Lectures on careers and professions were held at the centers as a supplement to the workshops. Many other lectures took place on field trips to hospitals, art museums, social service agencies, newspaper offices, etc. Aspirantes were encouraged to attend other lectures and career conferences on their own as well.

The counseling staff contributed consultation services to schools and a variety of community groups to students and to professionals in the guidance area.

Special conferences which supplemented the workshops and lectures were held for Aspirantes and their parents. The parents were kept current on the relationship between their children and the agency, and on the educational opportunities available to their children.

In the coming year, an attempt will be made to increase the number of group counseling sessions. The borough centers will concentrate on counseling services to freshmen, sophomores and juniors. The seniors will be serviced primarily by the Scholarship and Loan Center.

III. Scholarship and Loan Center

Although part of the Educational program, the Scholarship and Loan Center is a separate component, whose principal objective is the development of opportunities in post-secondary education on behalf of Puerto Rican students. Every student who requested the Center's assistance in post-secondary school placement and pursued the process this year was placed, and usually in one of the schools of his choice with the necessary financial aid.

This high degree of success can be attributed to the increased ability of the Scholarship and Loan Center to establish productive lines of communication with colleges, technical schools and other educational institutions. Among the agencies through which mutual assistance was provided were the College Entrance Examination Board, the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, the U.S. Office of Education, and the New York State Department of Education.

Recruiting more students than those in the caseload was stressed in the latter part of the program year. The Center developed new recruitment methods which attracted additional applicants to post-secondary institutions. The Open Admissions policy of the City University of New York spurred the Center into making a special effort to see that every potential Puerto Rican college student applied to the University.

Four hundred and fifty Puerto Rican high school juniors from high schools in New York City, attended the fourth annual college conference in May, sponsored by the Scholarship and Loan Center. Representatives of the State and City Universities of New York and 49 private colleges were present at the meeting held in the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York.

IV. College Retention Program

At a news conference attended by the New York Times, the Daily News, and El Diario-La Prensa in February, Aspira announced a three-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation to launch the new College Retention Program to assist Puerto Rican students in overcoming financial, social and academic difficulties during their college years. Another \$71,000 grant for the same purpose was received from the U.S. Office of Education.

Since 1965, Aspira has placed 3,892 Puerto Rican students in 99 colleges throughout the country, including 934 who began as freshmen in September, 1970. The agency estimates that aside from those it assisted, an equal number of Puerto Ricans went to college on their own. A study by Aspira indicated that an estimated two-thirds of the total Puerto Rican college population was dropping out before completing four years of college, and it became apparent that they needed more specific assistance while in college. Many of the students found themselves in alien environments, without social support, or faculty help, or adequate sources of financial aid. By December, 1969, nearly 200 requests for assistance from former Aspirantes had come into Aspira, although no formal aid program had been announced. The fact that many of these students had enrolled in college at all was a testimony to their motivation and capability. It was evident to Aspira that this human resource must not be wasted.

The program is the first of its kind to offer comprehensive counseling on an inter-institutional basis for disadvantaged college students. A professional staff of three counselors provides help with such problems as finding scholarship money, getting readmitted to college and choosing a career. They are presently working with 837 active cases.

The second part of the program is run by student representatives from eight Puerto Rican youth organizations. Through the Collegiate Forum, they arrange discussions, which are open to students and the community, on issues that affect Puerto Ricans today.

If further funds are found, the program will be expanded with additional educational and career counselors and work-study grants to ensure that many more college students would be reached and helped by the program.

Lay Leadership

Iván E. Irizarry, who recently joined Banco de Ponce in charge of New Business Development and has been a member of Aspira's board since 1966, was elected chairman of the Board of Aspira of New York this year. He succeeds Gilbert Ortiz, M.D., who continues to serve in his post as chairman of the Board of Aspira of America.

Before joining Banco de Ponce, he had been manager of the Banco Crédito Branch in New York. Mr. Irizarry also served in Boston as regional manager of Fomento, Puerto Rico's Economic Development Administration.

Several of the Board members, such as Dr. Ortiz and Manuel Casiano, resigned during the year to concentrate their efforts on the National Board. The Board of New York is composed of business, community and professional leadership and five Aspirantes.

Fund-Raising

Due to the fact that the major effort of the national fund-raising campaign is concentrated in New York, the focus of the fund-raising effort of the New York affiliate must be with local foundations and corporations. As Aspira as a national organization has expanded nationally, the major fund-raising initiative for the New York affiliate has stemmed from the national office. Serious efforts will be made during the coming year to develop a community-based effort which will more significantly involve the Board of the New York Affiliate.

ASPIRA OF AMERICA, INC.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY 1969-1970

<u>Affiliate</u>	<u>Intake</u>	<u>Caseload</u>	<u>Club Membership</u>	<u>No. Clubs</u>	<u>College Placement</u>
Aspira of New York	2,558	3,650	1,140	34	934
Aspira of Illinois	315	315	283	11	107
Aspira of New Jersey	323	323	217	8	56
Aspira of Pennsylvania	272	266	302	8	55
Aspira of Puerto Rico	<u>355</u>	<u>355</u>	<u>355</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>50</u>
TOTALS	3,823	4,909	2,297	73	1,202

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